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Lt. Gov.
Becky Skillman
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public servant. private citizen.

Young Becky Foddrill probably was always an old soul.

The little girl who grew up in Bedford, in the 1960s plugged herself into the community with nine years of 4-H involvement in "all the regular projects that girls participated in back then," stayed grounded in her faith, committed to her family, and self-motivated to balance being a straight-A student with extra-curricular activities including cheerleading and playing the drums in marching bands and concerts. She also much rather preferred discussing current events than talking about the latest clothing trends or celebrity du jour.

Little Becky of Bedford grew up to become Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman — the first female to be elected to the second-highest political office in the Hoosier State.





Early influences

Her interest in public service grew out of the relationship with her maternal grandfather, Edmund Flinn, with whom she remained close until his death in 1995.

"He talked to me as an adult from the time I was very young," Skillman says. "He was a very disciplined man, very loyal, a strong Christian. I had great respect for him. He had a keen interest in government, politics and current affairs, and I developed the same interests. It never occurred to me that I couldn't or shouldn't run for public office."

She landed her first political job at age 25, becoming Lawrence County recorder — a position she held for eight years. She spent an equal number of years as Lawrence County Clerk, during which time she was selected by all county officials in Indiana to serve as president of the Association of Indiana Counties. One of her responsibilities was to lobby the Indiana General Assembly on behalf of county government officials.

"The time I spent at the State House piqued my interest in running for a seat in the Indiana Senate," she remembers. "I thought I could best represent the people in south-central Indiana since that's where I grew up."

She ran for the Senate in 1992 and was elected to serve five counties. In 2004, she was running for her fourth term with no opponent.

"I held the no. 2 leadership position in the Senate, but then a fellow named Mitch Daniels had a different idea."

Because Skillman had been an unofficial adviser to the Daniels campaign, she was not completely shocked that he approached her about running as his lieutenant governor.

A family decision

"Still, such a decision gave reason for pause," she remembers. "Family considerations were and are first and foremost for me. I discussed it with my husband (Steve) and our son, Aaron, and my parents." (Aaron, who attended Purdue University, now lives in the Castleton area and works in the radio-controlled racing sports industry. At one time, he owned RC Raceway at Interstate 465 and Pendleton Pike, but has since sold that business.)

Familial support for her run as the state's 50th lieutenant governor was unanimous. Peo-

ple who know her today, including Rep. Woody Burton, a Greenwood resident, describe Skillman as an approachable, warm and gentle person whose candor never overshadows her kindness or compassion.

"I've never heard her say an unkind word about anyone," Burton says. "She is a great communicator with a soft demeanor, yet she is unafraid to stand firm. She can convey her message without being offensive to anyone. She's very grounded. Republicans and Democrats alike respect her."



A job with many hats

"Greenwood felt like home to us. We purposely chose to remain on the south side of Indianapolis to stay close in proximity to our families."

— Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman

On a job that often requires 70 or more hours a week, Lt. Gov. Skillman oversees all things agriculture; rural and community development; housing; defense development; energy; and tourism. She also serves as chairwoman of the state's Counter-terrorism and Security Council, president of the Indiana Senate, and the conduit for getting Gov. Daniels's legislative agenda through the General Assembly.

"I think the average Hoosier believes the lieutenant governor takes on any duty that the governor assigns to him or her. While that is a


very important part of the job description since he and I are partners in state government, many of the duties for my position are spelled out by state law and in the state constitution," Skillman says. "I learned from my colleagues across the country that the position of lieutenant governor in Indiana has more constitutional and statutory responsibilities than the same position in most other states."

She has led three international trade missions during her tenure — Guatemala, Costa Rica and Panama; Taiwan and Vietnam; and in February, a four-day trip to Mexico that deprived her of sleep but invigorated her professionally.

"We were up at 4:30 a.m. and still going at 11 p.m.," she recalls.

During the trip to Mexico, which ranks as the No. 2 export destination for Indiana and U.S. agricultural products, Skillman and her entourage of 26 Indiana food and agribusiness leaders explored opportunities to expand trade between Indiana and Mexico. The delegation focused time on building relationships with their Mexican counterparts and making export contacts that will further the economic development of Indiana's agribusiness sector.

Members of Indiana University, Purdue University, Ivy Tech Community College and Ball State University were among the Hoosier delegates who made that trip, too. They and Skillman signed formal partnerships between their schools and La Salle University in Mexico City and the Autonomous University of Hidalgo, where future faculty and student exchange programs will be available.



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Going the distance

Overseas air travels are not the only times Skillman racks up miles. She drives an estimated 16,600 miles each year throughout the state to meet with constituents, make jobs announcements, and more. She has visited all 92 counties, most on multiple occasions. Then there is the home-to-office commute, which for her years in the Senate totaled 150 miles round-trip each day from Bedford to downtown Indianapolis. She stayed in a rented Indianapolis apartment during the week and drove home to Bedford on weekends during her first nine months as lieutenant governor—easier in some ways, but still not the perfect solution.

"When you work the kind of hours I do, it's not realistic to commute 75 miles one way every day. Plus I was helping to set up an entirely new administration and attempting to move 69 bills through the first legislative session," Skillman says. "My husband is a real trooper, and he agreed we needed to move farther north."

They purchased a home in Greenwood.

"Greenwood felt like home to us. We purposely chose to remain on the south side of Indianapolis to stay close in proximity to our families," Skillman says.

Her parents, Jack and Catherine Foddrill, are now healthy late-70-somethings and still live in Lawrence County. They have another daughter, Trudy (Foddrill) Wagner, who is 3½ years younger than her high-profile sibling. She lives in Bedford with her husband. Steve's four brothers also live there, plus he has sisters in Martinsville and Brownsburg.

The Skillmans live "where neighbors care about one another." The lieutenant governor has met many of them and appreciates that everyone "offers to be as neighborly as we want and yet allows us to have our privacy as well."



Downtime at home

When she is able to soak in a dose of solitude, Skillman likes to watch the news and either historical or comedy movies with her husband. If laughing were considered a hobby, it would be one of hers.

She also spends time walking and jogging in their neighborhood, and works out in their home-based gym. She occasionally hits the greens with avid golfer Steve, a retired GM plant manager who works part-time at Smock Golf Course at County Line Road and Sher-

man Drive, smack at the edge of Marion and Johnson counties.

"Well, I have golf clubs," Becky Skillman says, "but to say I golf would be quite a stretch."

She also enjoys dining out at Greenwood-area restaurants — with a penchant for seafood and dark chocolate.

"Dark chocolate is a food group, isn't it?" she quips. "It has, after all, been deemed healthy for us with its antioxidants."

"Well, I have golf clubs, but to say I golf would be quite a stretch."

— Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman



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No competition

Former Fayetteville High School basketball point guard Steve Skillman wed Tunnelton High School graduate Becky Foddrill on Nov. 22, 1969. Aaron was born one day before their 10th anniversary.

Steve and his bride-to-be met when she was only 12 years old (her birthday is Sept. 26), nearly four years his junior. Three years later, a mutual friend arranged a double date.

"He treated me with great respect, and frankly, even though I had dated other boys before, during and after, no one else could measure up."

All the while they dated, the only clash of opinions was during basketball games when their rival teams shared the court.

"We couldn't both be on the winning side," Becky Skillman says.

One goal

Unlike the outcome of team-vs.-team sports scenarios, Skillman believes that every Hoosier deserves to be a winner in life, but it requires intense commitment, discipline, patience and perseverance from all. She acknowledges that there are far-reaching, critical issues that need resolution for her hope for Indiana's future—total state economic recovery. Answers are not easy, but she thrives on finding solutions to tough issues.

"We must tackle our problems and achieve the great potential we know is possible in a way that brings honor to our state and opportunity to our citizens," she says.

She takes John Quincy Adams's philosophy about leadership to heart. Our nation's sixth president said, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, to learn more, and become more, then you are a leader."

"I think his message to all of us is that you don't have to be a governor or a CEO to lead. We can all be mentors and inspire others to dream more, learn more, and become more. That is leadership at its finest."

It is also the legacy that Lt. Gov. Skillman plans to leave. **S**

